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Dissertation abstract

Evangelicals in Addis Ababa, 1919–1991, with Special Reference to the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus and the Addis Ababa Synod

Dissertation accepted at the Fachbereich Orientalistik of the Universität Hamburg, and defended on January 9, 2004 to obtain a Dr. phil. degree of Philosophy

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JOHANNES LAUNHARDT, *Evangelicals in Addis Ababa, 1919–1991, with Special Reference to the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus and the Addis Ababa Synod*, Dissertation accepted at the Fachbereich Orientalistik of the Universität Hamburg, and defended on January 9, 2004 to obtain a Dr. phil. degree of Philosophy.

Many studies have been made about the history of Protestantism in Ethiopia and the expansion of Evangelical Christianity in the Western and Southern part of the country. No detailed surveys about evangelical developments in Addis Ababa were published. The author tries to fill that gap, focusing on the years 1919–1991.

The beginning of Evangelical Christianity in Addis Ababa was marked by three factors; the presence of an Evangelical Association made up of Orthodox clerics aiming at giving the Bible a central role in the teaching and life of the church, the immigration of Evangelicals from Eritrea and Wollega, and the establishment of headquarters as well as educational and medical institutions by Protestant missions. This period came to an end through the Italian occupation which did not favour evangelical activities and expelled most of the Protestant missionaries.

During the time of the missionaries' absence many evangelical congregations came into being, especially in Wollega, Kambata, and Wolayta, initiated by Ethiopian lay-preachers. During the 1940's the number of Protestants in Ethiopia grew to about one hundred thousand. Church leaders of Addis Ababa tried to shape that movement through the Conference of Ethiopian Evangelical Churches. They did not succeed in forming one Ethiopian Evangelical Church. Several denominational churches were constituted. The missions in consequence integrated their institutions and property into the Ethiopian churches, the Mekane Yesus Church (EECMY) being one of them.

The third chapter of the dissertation, covering the years 1969–1974, takes up the question of how the Lutheran congregations in Addis Ababa responded to the growing urban needs. A Council was established, social and development activities started, and in 1974 the EECMY Addis Ababa Synod (AAS) formed in order to be better equipped for service in the capital and its environs.

The last chapter studies the situation of Evangelical Christians and Churches in Addis Ababa during the *Därg* regime. Many cases of harassment, imprisonment, confiscation of property, closing of churches and the killing of the AAS president are listed. It was a time of testing and it was a time for service. Thousands of needy children and their families were assisted by the Church and famine relief programs started. It was also a time for Christian witness. Lay-people, choirs and healing services played an essential role. Between 1974 and 1991 membership in the EECMY Addis Ababa Synod grew from 3,640 to 60,639.